

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
TRSE-00 /066 W
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R 181817Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1198
INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
USMISSION USBERLIN
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
CINC USAREUR HEIDELBERG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 15107

USCINCEUR AND CINC USAREUR FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: FILBINGER AND SPAETH: CDU VIEWS FROM BONN

REFS: (A) BONN 14606 DTG 101733Z AUG 78
(B) STUTTGART 1562 DTG 161620Z AUG 78

SUMMARY

WELL-PLACED CDU SOURCES IN BONN HAVE GIVEN US FURTHER INSIGHT INTO NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FILBINGER AFFAIR. THEY ALSO ASSERT THAT LOTHAR SPAETH, IN ORDER TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT, WILL HAVE TO SUCCEED FILBINGER AS CDU STATE CHAIRMAN.
END SUMMARY.

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1. COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE FILBINGER AFFAIR RAISED MAJOR PROBLEMS FOR THE CDU LEADERSHIP IN BONN AND IN STUTTGART. AS WE NOTED IN REF A, FILBINGER HAS LONG BEEN A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE IN THE NATIONAL PARTY. HE WAS UNQUESTIONABLY A "LANDESVATER" IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG, AND HE IS STILL IMMENSELY POPULAR THERE, BUT HIS BRAND OF POLITICS DID NOT COMMAND BROAD CDU SUPPORT BEYOND HIS

OWN TURF. FORTHAT REASON, FILBINGER'S FALL FROM POWER ELICITED VARIED REACTIONS IN THE CDU CAMP. IN THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS, WE DISTILL A FEW IMPRESSIONS FROM OUR TALKS WITH SOURCES IN THE CDU NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS IN BONN.

2. THE FINAL COMPROMISE, WHEREBY FILBINGER WILL STEP DOWN AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT BUT STAY ON AS CDU CHAIRMAN IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AND DEPUTY NATIONAL CDU CHAIRMAN, IS CLEARLY AN EFFORT IN DAMAGE LIMITATION. IN JURISDICTIONAL TERMS, FILBINGER WAS, STRICTLY SPEAKING, A PROBLEM FOR THE CDU IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG. HOWEVER, HIS CASE DIRECTLY IMPINGED ON THE NATIONAL INTERESTS OF HIS PARTY, AND REQUIRED THAT CDU CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL AND OTHERS KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON EVENTS, WHILE TRYING NOT TO INFRINGE ON LOCAL SENSITIVITIES IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG.

3. THIS COMPROMISE REMOVES FILBINGER FROM HIS MOST VISIBLE AND POLITICALLY CONTENTIOUS OFFICE. IT THUS RELIEVES MUCH OF THE PUBLIC PRESSURE WHICH THE FESTERING DEBATE OF RECENT MONTHS HAD GENERATED. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE CDU BELIEVED THAT IT HAD TO KEEP FILBINGER IN HIS PARTY OFFICES, IN ORDER TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF CAVING IN COMPLETELY TO WHAT MANY MEMBERS HONESTLY VIEW AS A LEFTIST SMEAR CAMPAIGN. THE LAND CDU THUS BOWED TO A

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POLITICAL REALITY (WHICH CDU CIRCLES IN BONN DO NOT CHALLENGE), I.E., THAT SACKING FILBINGER FROM ALL POSTS WOULD HAVE HAD DISASTROUS REPERCUSSIONS ON THE CDU POSITION IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG.

4. BEYOND THESE INTERNAL CDU DYNAMICS, THE DELICATE CDU/CSU RELATIONSHIP INFLUENCED THE FILBINGER CASE THERE ARE TWO MAIN ISSUES INVOLVED:

(A) CDU HEADQUARTERS SENSES A GROWING (ALBEIT RELUCTANT) RANK-AND-FILE WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE NOTION OF A FOURTH-PARTY EFFORT, I.E., THE NATIONAL CSU WHICH STRAUSS HAS LONG CHAMPIONED. MANY CDU SUPPORTERS BELIEVE THAT CSU CHAIRMAN STRAUSS WILL ULTIMATELY PREVAIL IN HIS ARGUMENT WITH KOHL ON THIS POINT; SOME ARE DISPOSED TO TRY THE FOURTH-PARTY GAMBIT IN THE HOPE THAT IT JUST MIGHT BRING THE UNION BACK TO POWER IN BONN.

(B) FILBINGER'S RESIGNATION AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT HAS NOT IMPROVED TIES BETWEEN THE CDU AND THE CSU. IN RECENT DAYS, STRAUSS AND HIS COHORTS HAVE REPEATEDLY SNIPED AT THE CDU'S LACK OF SOLIDARITY WITH FILBINGER,

AND ITS UNWILLINGNESS TO MUCKRAKE THE PAST OF SPD
LEADERS IN RETALIATION FOR WHAT -- SO IT IS ARGUED --

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 15107

HOCHHUTH DID TO FILBINGER.

5. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, KOHL'S STRONG DESIRE TO
KEEP FILBINGER IN TOP CDU POSITIONS ACQUIRES A NEW SIG-
NIFICANCE. IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE FILBINGER AND HIS
MANY SUPPORTERS MORE RESISTANT TO THE LURE OF JOINING
A NATIONAL CSU. (CDU CIRCLES HERE CONFIRM REPORTS THAT
CSU EMISSARIES HAVE APPROACHED FILBINGER IN RECENT WEEKS
TO SOLICIT HIS HELP IN A FOURTH-PARTY EFFORT.)

6. OUR CDU CONTACTS ALSO EXPECT THAT FILBINGER'S POLI-
TICAL FORTUNES WILL CONTINUE TO DECLINE. THEY THINK IT
LIKELY THAT, AT THE NEXT CDU CONVENTION, FILBINGER WILL
CEDE HIS POSITION AS DEPUTY NATIONAL CHAIRMAN TO SPAETH,
WHO AS MINISTER-PRESIDENT WILL HAVE A BETTER CLAIM TO
IT.

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7. WE ALSO DETECT A STRONG BELIEF THAT SPAETH MUST SOONER OR LATER SUCCEED FILBINGER AS CDU CHAIRMAN IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG. SPAETH, WHOSE RELATIONS WITH FILBINGER HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN GOOD, WILL NOT HAVE FULL CONTROL OF BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG POLITICS UNTIL/UNLESS HE SHUNTS FILBINGER ASIDE. HE MAY HAVE TO MAKE THIS MOVE BEFORE THE NEXT LAND ELECTIONS IN 1980. OUR CDU CONTACTS CITE THE LONG-STANDING FEUD BETWEEN STRAUSS AND GOPPEL IN BAVARIA AS THE BEST ARGUMENT FOR HAVING THE SAME MAN HOLD BOTH OFFICES. THEY BELIEVE THAT SPAETH HAS DRAWN THE SAME CONCLUSION FROM THE BAVARIAN EXPERIENCE.
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